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RANCH LIBRARIES
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BY

LINDA A. EASTMAN

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XV

BRANCH LIBRARIES AND OTHER DISTRIBUTING AGENCIES

LINDA A. EASTMAN
Cleveland Public Library

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Introduction

The history of city libraries, oft-times repeated, has proved that only a limited proportion of the population, beyond that within immediate and easy access, frequent the central library. To reach the remainder, some method must be adopted for carrying the books to them; the principal agencies used have been: (1) branch libraries; (2) deposit stations; (3) delivery stations; (4) traveling libraries; (5) class room and home libraries. Whether one or all of these agencies be employed, the rule holds good that, with the growth of the city, the progressive public library in this country evolves into a library system with its central library and its outlying posts. In this expansion from a unit into a system the library follows the analogy so frequently pointed out between the development of the public schools and public libraries.

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At the first meeting of the American Library Association in 1876, Justin Winsor gave this account of what was then the only important library system in the United States:*

"The Boston public library now consists of a central library, containing the great students' collection in the Bates Hall, and a popular department of over 30,000 volumes. Communicating with headquarters daily, by boxes passing to and from, are six branch libraries, containing from seven to seventeen thousand volumes each, and situated at from two to seven miles from the central library, forming a cordon of posts. Farther outlying we have begun a system of deliveries or agencies, where orders for books are received, which are sent to the nearest branch or to the central library. The books are sent in response, and delivered at the delivery. In the same way the branches are deliveries of the central library. The system works well and popularizes the institution; and the branches and deliveries, instead of detracting from the importance of the central library, only serve to advertise it and to increase its circulation, so that now the issues of the central library are between two and three times what they were in 1870 when we had no branches; and the grand total of issues of the entire library is now from four to five times what it was in that year. There is, of course, more or less delay in the delivery service, owing to our boxes passing but once each way in a day. I deem it not unlikely that much time will before long be saved by using a telegraphic wire for the messages; nor do I deem it impracticable to annihilate time by the pneumatic tube."

Dr. Winsor's forecast of the use of telegraph for messages was long since improved upon by the perfecting of

* *Library Journal*, 1:125–26.

the telephone, and were he writing today he might say, "nor do I deem it impracticable to annihilate time by aviation".

The rapid growth of library systems since 1876, when Boston had the only one of importance in the country, is an interesting record. The report of the World's Library Congress in 1893 gave 47 libraries having branches or delivery stations, or both, a total of 81 branches and 140 stations being recorded. The "Statistics of public, society, and school libraries" for 1908, published by the United States Bureau of Education, devoted Table 22 to city public library systems. This included 210 libraries, of which 151 had one or more branches each, 75 had deposit stations, 52, delivery stations, and 75, traveling libraries in schools and other institutions; a total of 485 branch libraries, 871 deposit stations, 418 delivery stations, and 5,618 traveling libraries were reported. This table has been omitted from later reports, but the one for 1913 reported 2,049 branch libraries.

With but few exceptions, these systems began with a single library, and gradually expanded by adding other agencies to meet the growth and needs of the city; New York and Brooklyn are the notable examples of systems in which the branches were developed before the great central library, while Pittsburgh and Louisville exemplify the initial planning of the system as a whole.

Branch Libraries

The location selected for a branch library is generally near the local business or residence center of the district to be served. It is planned much as any small library would be; it may consist of a room or rooms in a building occupied by a coöperating institution, such as a school, a

park- or field-house, social settlement, parish house, church, rented store, or it may be a fully equipped library building with separate rooms for each department of the work, and with added features of lecture- and club-rooms. The organization and methods are usually uniform with those of the central library, with possible variations to meet local needs.

A branch has its own collection of books; it contains properly any books the use of which is constant enough to justify their retention there, while less-used books, expensive sets and, except in very special cases, books of which one copy should be sufficient for the city, are housed at the central library. The branch supplements its own resources from the central collection, telephone connection and regular messenger service making prompt deliveries possible. The work of the circulating and children's departments is usually relatively heavier, and of the reference department lighter, than at the central library, to which every one doing anything in the nature of scholarly or research work is referred.

The centralization of much of the work of administration, book preparation and supply, makes for economy and for unification of the routine work of the system. It also frees the branch staff for more direct personal work with readers, and for developing the branch library as an educational center for the intellectual, civic, and social life of the community. Are the opportunities for putting the right books at the right time into the hands of the children and the foreign born any where else so great or fraught with such rich potentialities? One studying the possibilities for intensive community service may question whether the whole range of social endeavor offers a richer field than that of the branch libraries in our cities.

A good presentation of the differences between an independent library and a branch library from the point of view of the librarian or branch librarian, of the assistant, and of the user of the library is given by A. E. Bostwick in his *American public library,* p. 237.

Regional branches, equipped with large floating collections and delivery service with which to supply auxiliary branches and stations in their respective districts, are planned for Chicago in a system the development of which will doubtless be studied with interest by librarians of the largest cities, since the plan anticipates effecting such important gains as the freeing of much space at the central library, and more than doubling the delivery service without added expense for the latter.

Some branches, because of their location and the clientele served, take on some of the characteristics of the special library; such, for instance, are the separate children's branch, the school branch, a branch used exclusively by one nationality in a city where the foreign-born have colonized, and the negro branch in the South. Still further specialization may be found in a municipal reference branch, a business branch, and an educational branch at school headquarters. Each of these specialized types has its own peculiar requirements and problems.

The term sub-branch has been used by some libraries to differentiate the small branch which is open shorter hours or is in other ways giving only partial branch service.

Deposit Stations

A deposit station consists of a small collection of books varying from perhaps one or two hundred to as many thousand volumes, placed in a store, school, factory, club, institutional home, telephone exchange, or other available

place, from which books are issued during certain hours of each day or week. It is often the most satisfactory agency for reaching definite groups of people who congregate regularly at a given place for any given purpose, as that purpose may furnish a community of interest and a basis for book selection.

The station may be in charge of an assistant sent out from the library, a volunteer worker, a teacher if at a school, an office employee of the factory, or the storekeeper or clerk; the first method makes it possible to maintain a higher average grade of service and quality of reading, and more reliable records, and therefore seems more generally desirable, though some of the other methods may show a larger circulation of books for a given cost. If located in a factory, school, or other institution, the success of a station depends to a large extent upon the active interest and co-operation of the firm or institution; hence it happens that the factory stations which show most satisfactory results are usually in those factories where the best general welfare work is being done.

Public Library service through a station in a business concern, or an institution sometimes leads to the employment of a trained librarian by the firm or institution, and the building up of its own library; if this is confined to material bearing on its work, the public library may still continue to furnish books for recreational and general cultural reading, and to meet the demand for all such books as are wanted only occasionally.

Delivery Stations

These stations are operated in a similar manner to deposit stations, except that no collection of books is kept

at the stations; orders for books are left by the reader, sent to the central library, and the books sent back by the first delivery, to be called for by the reader. For such stations the charging of the books, all statistical and record work, and in some cases even the computing of fines is done at the central library, thus reducing the work of the station agent to a minimum. Several of the libraries operating a large number of stations place them in stores only, often in drug stores; in some cases the additional custom brought to the store through the station is considered compensation enough, in others a fixed monthly or yearly sum is paid to the station keeper, or again, he may be paid so much per volume, rates varying from a third of a cent to two cents for each book issued. The store station seems to admit of the possibility of fictitious padding of the circulation, without sufficient preventive checks.

The delivery station can be operated with a smaller number of books—its disadvantages being that the reader is dependent entirely on finding-lists and his own (frequently insufficient) knowledge of books in making his selections, that he has to stop at the station first to leave the order and again to get his books, and that he has to repeat this process if none of the books asked for were delivered nor satisfactory ones substituted; the deposit station gives a collection of books to choose from—with the disadvantage that it may not contain the particular books wanted; deposit stations which are also delivery stations seem fitted to give the most satisfactory service, and this combination of the two types of stations is frequently made. The important element of personal service in book selection is of necessity partly eliminated

in service through delivery stations, and reduced to long distance service.

Traveling Libraries, Classroom and Home Libraries

The traveling library as an adjunct to a city system is utilized in various ways. It is a small case of from twenty to fifty or more books sent periodically from place to place; the books are made up in fixed collections, or changed to suit the tastes or interests of different groups of readers. Undoubtedly the largest number of these traveling libraries go to the schoolrooms of the grade schools, usually under the name of classroom libraries or collections; these are more fully treated in A.L.A. Manual no. XXVIII, *The public library and the public schools,*[1] and home libraries in no. XXIX, *Library work with children.*[2] Other places to which traveling libraries are sent are the fire engine houses and fire boats, street-car barns, police-stations, factories, clubs, missions, settlements, and various other institutions. The traveling library can generally be put in charge of a volunteer librarian with supervision from the central library; it is important to keep the charging methods simple.

The above types of agencies are not always distinctly defined and one frequently takes on features of, or merges into, another; some stations, for instance, are also reading-rooms, while agencies called stations by one library are denominated branches or sub-branches by another. The separate branch reading-room, where it has been tried, has usually, if successful, added the circulating feature to its work.

A well-developed branch system may have abundant room for any or all of the minor types of agencies as supplementary and experimental agencies; a traveling library

[1] To be published.
[2] Out of print.

may grow into a station, and a station into a branch. Chicago and St. Louis operated very extensive station agencies for years before any branches were opened. A system of branches sometimes develops before the central library, as in New York and Brooklyn, where for some years the headquarters of the branch work have included only the administrative offices without a parent library; Philadelphia and Cleveland are examples of systems in which permanent branch buildings have been built before the central library was either adequately or permanently housed.

Home Delivery, Parcel Post, Book-Wagon

Several attempts have been made to adapt a plan of home delivery of books to public library use, notably in Springfield and Somerville, Mass., in both of which places the experiment was carried on through a series of years, and discontinued because there were not enough readers who cared to avail themselves of the privilege and pay the small fee necessary to maintain the service. The St. Louis Public Library and some others for some time delivered books by messenger on request and allowed their return in the same way, the card-holder paying expense of transportation both ways.

From Minneapolis came the suggestion of book collection boxes, to be placed like the mail boxes at transfer corners and other traffic centers; books to be returned may be dropped into these boxes by readers, and collections made by the library at stated intervals. The plan has not been put into operation.

The parcel post has partially solved the question of a cheap library post, although a penny post is still advocated for library books. Many libraries now offer a library mail

service which is used as a matter of convenience by a fluctuating number of borrowers who are glad to pay the mailing charges when they cannot themselves get to the library for their books. The free mail service for books in raised type for the blind has proved a boon. One western library offers free mail delivery to county residents.

Various experiments have been made in home delivery by messenger, and Brighton, England, has tried a penny delivery by tram-car. The book-wagon for house-to-house delivery has not yet had much use in cities.

Township and County Library Systems

Analogous to the city system are the township and county library systems which are now being rapidly developed to meet the needs of the country districts, the public library of the principal town or of the county seat usually becoming the central library. There seem to be advantages in working with the township as the unit, as the system can be developed gradually, one township at a time, until it becomes a county system. California offers an example of a state-wide plan for a county library system organized from the state library as the center. The use of the book-wagon, which takes a traveling library from house to house, as first operated in the Hagerstown, Md., County Free Library, and in some parts of Wisconsin, is an interesting feature of rural extension which is becoming more common.

Library-Extension Problems of a City System

In the administration of a branch-library system, certain questions of policy assume large importance as the system expands, inasmuch as they vitally affect the running machinery of the system and its resulting efficiency. Only the general tendency in regard to these questions is here

indicated, all branch problems being modified by local conditions:

a) To what extent shall the book collections of the branches be kept uniform? A nucleus of general reference works, standard and popular books, and a small proportion of current additions can be duplicated advantageously for all branches alike; beyond this, differentiation in book selection is often desirable, for the class of people served by one branch may be utterly unlike that of another in education, environment, literary and practical interests. Experience shows that in opening a branch in a community unaccustomed to books and libraries, it is sometimes well to begin with only the lighter and more popular books, adding the standards, the so-called "books of power", as the readers are prepared to use them. Much greater uniformity can be maintained to advantage in the juvenile collections than in those for adult readers.

b) Shall the selection, buying and cataloging of the books be done at the branches or at the central library? Selection by the branch librarian, subject to approval or revision at the central library, with centralization of the buying and also largely of the cataloging of the books, seem to effect the greatest economy, while insuring uniformity where essential, and permitting differentiation where advisable.

c) Shall there be supervision from the central library? Yes, general supervision always to the extent of maintaining uniformity of standards, while allowing sufficient freedom for initiative on the part of the branch librarians. In the case of a large system there may be more or less departmental supervision also; the latter is doubtless most necessary in the children's work, because of its relatively greater importance at the branches.

In general, uniformity is important in all matters affecting the public use of the library; also in all of the routine and systematic work in which such uniformity makes for ease and economy in the training and transferring of assistants. Less centralization and greater local control may be desirable in cases where separate libraries have been merged into a system as branches.

In a growing town the evolution of a single library into a library system is frequently through a beginning with stations which grow into branches, necessitating only a gradual reorganization in methods; but the probable future development of a system should always be an important determining factor in decisions as to methods which would be affected. The following are points to be considered in the establishment of branches and other agencies, or in a comparative study of library systems; their number prevents much beyond outline treatment within the limits of this chapter, but many of them are covered with more detail elsewhere in the manual, or in articles named in the appended bibliography.

1. Number and size of branches—Are these sufficient to meet the needs of all parts of the city adequately and impartially? Location of branches in relation to: (a) distance from central library and from other branches or distributing agencies; (b) local centers of population and business, car lines and car transfer centers; (c) classes of readers to be served, their nationalities, local industries, organizations, etc.; (d) liability of neighborhood to change in character and population. In general it may be said that the city which provides branch libraries not more than a mile apart is not in danger of overdoing its library facilities, while in the most densely populated parts of large cities two or three times as many may be needed. The

working estimate has been made of one branch to every twenty-five to forty thousand of the population; for outlying, scattered districts, even the minimum, twenty-five thousand, may be too large. A topographic map of the city, divided into present and prospective library districts, showing population and nationalities in the districts, is an aid in the development and expansion of a city system. The testing of a location in temporary quarters before deciding on a permanent site and building is sometimes desirable; the moving of a branch has proved in more than one instance how greatly the location can affect the use of the library. In some parts of the country, the race-problem is one which materially affects the planning of a branch system.

2. Buildings, interior arrangement and equipment.—Are these so planned as to meet best the needs of the particular districts in which they are placed? As a branch collection should be kept a live working collection by periodical weeding out of superseded material for central storage or other disposal, less room is needed in a branch building than in the independent library for storage and work room; less is needed also for administration. In some places, the inclusion of living rooms for the janitor proves desirable. (See A.L.A. Manual no. X on *Library architecture* and A.L.A. Manual no. XI, on *Furniture, fixtures and equipment.)*

3. Rules and regulations.—These should be such as to insure, so far as possible, equal privileges to all citizens; a uniform interpretation of the spirit and the letter of the rules is more difficult to maintain as the staff is scattered into widely differing centers and conditions. Staff manuals and other forms of written or printed instructions.

4. Hours of opening; Sunday and holiday opening.—Are these the same for the entire system, or varied to meet local needs? Where conditions vary greatly in different parts of the city, a difference in hours may be more economical as well as more effective.

5. Size and organization of the branch staff; qualifications of staff (including special languages in foreign districts); methods of appointment, training, assignment of work, reports on staff, grades, promotions, salaries, interchange of assistants, substitutes, staff meetings.—Appointments are usually best made to the service, assignments to specific branches being made by the librarian, in consultation with heads of departments and branches. Uniform standards of efficiency should be maintained while endeavoring to give each assistant scope for his best powers. (These topics are more fully discussed in A.L.A. Manual no. XII, *Library administration.)*

6. Cost of maintenance.—Are results commensurate with expenditures, in the system as a whole, and in each branch? Comparative branch reports and other tests of efficiency.

7. The annual budget.—Of what appropriations is it composed, how is it made up, and on what basis is the quota for each branch decided?

8. Book appropriation and purchase.—(a) Basis of distribution of book funds to central library and branches; (b) methods in selecting and ordering books; (c) number of volumes added annually, and average cost per volume; (d) extent of duplication; (e) accessioning and mechanical preparation of books centralized or done at branch? In a large system great economy results from organizing the processes of book-buying and much of the record preparation, so that the orders for duplication are received and handled together. The centralization of the mechanical

preparation and such record work as does not lend itself to duplicating processes is open to question; if it can be done at the branch as "busy work" by the branch staff, it may be more economically done there.

9. Classification and cataloging of: (a) central collections; (b) branch collections, simplified juvenile catalogs. Branch records for central library, official catalog, and union shelf-list. Use of Library of Congress cards, and of duplicating processes in cataloging. Printed catalogs and finding-lists.

10. Access to shelves of: (a) central library; (b) branches. Access to shelves in branches is almost universal in this country, even where the central library has closed shelves. Arrangement for safeguarding open-shelf collections. Annual withdrawals and book losses; methods of inventory and withdrawal; frequency of weeding out of open-shelf collections and basis for decisions; mobility of collections. Records which permit of easy transfer of books from one collection to another are most desirable where there is the possibility of a change in the character of readers and the resulting needs, such as is frequently and rapidly occurring in some of the foreign districts of the larger cities.

11. Seating capacity of reading-rooms for adults at branches; average number of readers daily; character of readers.—Extent to which reading-rooms are supplied with periodicals and newspapers, including those in foreign languages; uniformity or variation in periodical lists throughout the system; interchange of periodicals. Are reading-rooms supplied with a collection of standard authors; size of collection; are specially good editions selected for it; are duplicate copies kept for circulation; and does reading-room use lead to issue of duplicates for home use?

12. Branch reference work: (a) character, extent, and degree of uniformity of reference collections; (b) amount and character of reference work done; (c) methods of supplementing the branch reference collections with material from the central library and other branches; (d) special reference work for literary, debating, and study clubs, schools, missionary societies, clergymen, etc.; (e) methods employed to interest branch readers in the larger resources of the central reference collection, and to send them to central library when desirable. Reference work by telephone. Help from specialists at central library.

13. Children's work in branches: (a) organization in relation to other work of branch and to children's work of the system as a whole; (b) training of children's librarians; (c) seating capacity of children's rooms and average number of readers daily; (d) class of children served; (e) size of juvenile book collection; number of titles, and extent of duplication, (f) volume and character of circulation; (g) discipline; (h) story-hour and children's club work; (i) bulletins and posters. (See A.L.A. Manual, no. XXIX, *Library work with children.)*

14. Work with the foreign born: (a) nationalities, their respective numbers, location, characteristics, group interests; (b) methods of reaching; (c) book collections in foreign languages, their selection and treatment; (d) foreign periodicals and newspapers; (e) English books for the immigrant, e. g. language aids, books on American life, civics, history, etc.; (f) co-operation with other agencies.

15. Loan work in branch system: (a) method of registering branch borrowers; central or local registration; union register, black-list and guarantor's list at central library; address register; transfers; (b) can branch borrowers draw books from central library or from other

branches (1) on regular card? (2) on special or universal card? (c) can books drawn from one place be returned at another, and if so, methods employed? (d) size and character of branch circulating-collections in relation to number of readers and circulation; (e) books in foreign languages at branches, and method of selecting these; (f) number of books from central collection loaned through branches; (g) method of ordering and filling branch orders for loans from central library; (h) inter-branch loans; (i) methods of keeping branch staff and patrons informed of contents of and additions to central collection; (j) precautions against contagious diseases.

16. Messenger service and transportation, methods, comparative cost, and efficiency: (a) of delivery by boy on street-car, bicycle, motorcycle, wagon, automobile or express; (b) packing of books, in paper-wrapped parcels, flexible telescope bags, boxes, chests, or trunks; (c) frequency of delivery, and cost of transportation.

17. Bookbinding and repair: (a) Is there general supervision? (b) by a specialist? (c) what minor repairs are done at the branches? (d) by whom?

18. Supplies, building superintendence, repairs, janitorial work.—To what extent are these centralized? Methods.

19. Auditoriums and clubrooms, their use and correlation to work of libraries.—Lecture courses. Library clubs. Civic coöperation is an important factor, as shown in New York, where many of the free lecture courses of the Board of Education are given in the lecture-rooms of the branch libraries; and also in the combination field-house and branch library as developed in the Chicago public library system, where the assembly hall and clubroom facilities are closely interwoven with the library work proper, but

where are also centered many social features with which it is not possible for the ordinary branch library to be in close touch. The use of the assembly halls and clubrooms by neighborhood organizations, as in St. Louis and Cleveland, strengthens the social relations of the libraries with the community.

20. Other extension work at branches: (a) relations with schools and other institutions; (b) methods of advertising; (c) exhibits. To what extent are these planned or controlled from the central building?

21. Stations and other minor agencies: (a) number, kind, distribution, and housing; (b) relation to central library and to branches; (c) coöperation with other institutions, as schools, factories, clubs, settlement houses, park centers, playgrounds, public bathhouses, churches, etc.; (d) character and cost of service; (e) methods employed; (f) standard of reading maintained as compared with that of central and branch libraries.

22. The proportion of total circulation of the system through: (a) the branches; (b) stations; (c) other agencies. Comparative cost and effectiveness of various kinds of distributing agencies.

23. Reports and accounts of system; extent of centralization and methods employed.—Auditing. Blanks and forms. Printed reports.

24. Nomenclature of the system.—Some existing differences in practice are suggested by the following synonymous terms: central library, main library, director, librarian-in-chief, librarian; sub-branch, small branch, deposit station, distributing station; service station, station in charge of library employees.

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BOOK LISTS

A.L.A. Catalog 1912–1921. 1923. Cloth, $4.00.

The Booklist. 10 numbers a year. Subscription price. $2.00.

Booklist books (of current year). Issued about March 1. Paper, 25 cents.

Graded list of books for children. Compiled by a committee of the N. E. A. 1922. Cloth, $1.25.

The hospital library. Compiled by E. Kathleen Jones. 1923. Cloth, $2.25.

New guide to reference books. Isadore G. Mudge. 1922. Cloth, $3.00; interleaved, $3.50.

Periodicals for the small library. Frank K. Walter. 3d ed. 1919. Paper, 25 cents.

Plays for children. An annotated index. Alice I. Hazeltine. 1921. Cloth, $1.50.

Viewpoints in travel. Josephine A. Rathbone. 1919. Paper, 60 cents.

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LIBRARY ECONOMY

Essentials in library administration. Revised by Ethel F. McCollough. 1922. Paper, 50 cents.

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